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Trouble in the CIA

Russians and Congress Are After Its Hide

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THE Central Intelligence Agency's undercover men are running for cover behind an impregnable redoubt. The Soviet "Department of Disinformation," says an agency report, is trying "to achieve the destruction, break-up and neutralization of CIA." The report declares:

"By striking at CIA, the attack also centers on the intelligence community with particular thrust" — do they mean THRUSH? — "against the FBI and Mr. J. Edgar

Hoover." The spooks are cleverer than they're given credit for being. They know, at least, where safety lies.

By striking at CIA, they imply, congressional critics like Sen. Stephen A. Young are striking into forbidden territory. Thus do they hope to destroy, break-up and neutralize the Ohio Democrat's demand that a congressional watchdog committee be established to oversee the CIA.

SENATOR YOUNG isn't the first person to advance the watchdog committee idea, nor will he be the last.

Such proposals come up regularly, especially when, as occurred recently, the CIA is caught with another one of its slips showing, but the proposals are just as regularly knocked down.

The CIA has powerful friends on Capitol Hill, and most of them seem willing to let the intelligence organization go on making its own mistakes in its own way.

But Young's idea is still a good one. The trouble is that when the CIA slips it's the U.S. Government that gets bruised and battered. The five-years-ago attempt by a CIA spook to bribe Lee Kuan Yew (now of Singapore, then of Malaysia) is a minor peccadillo compared to some of the major imbroglios for which the CIA has been responsible.

Everyone, as Senator



SENATOR YOUNG

Come into my kennel

Young declares, "is aware of the damage to our prestige caused by CIA bungling of the U-2 incident of five years ago and of the disastrous role CIA operatives played in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion." And for these and other CIA mishaps neither "Department D" nor THRUSH can be held responsible.

CONCEDED: The CIA, as a secret organization, can't trumpet its successes when others blast its failures. Still and all, no government or

organization, at least in a democracy, ought to be answerable only to itself.

Outside supervision is always necessary, even if, as in the CIA's case, that supervision still might not keep the organization from ever making a mistake. And there is no reason to assume that congressmen are going to blab the CIA's precious secrets. A joint congressional watchdog committee has been overseeing the Atomic Energy Commission since just after World War II and none of its members ever has been found violating security.

Similarly, Congress has the right and the responsibility to have at least a few of its trusted members really know what's going on in the sacrosanct precincts of the CIA. The legislative branch can't administer an executive agency, but no executive agency can claim absolution from any legislative purview.

As for "Department D," the Russians would seem to be wasting their time. Why do they bother producing forgeries when the CIA itself gives them all the ammunition they need?